



# Stryker Brigade Combat Team: A Window to the Future

*By Lieutenant Colonel Robin Selk and Major Ted Read*

**W**e are often admonished to “improve your foxhole every day, because you never know how bad you might need it tomorrow.” The foxhole and the defense allow us time to prepare for an offensive operation.<sup>1</sup> Army Transformation calls for a similar effort, to get better every day while preparing for future operations. To that end, the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) is an existing formation, an organization that is optimized for mobility, and a lens through which we can glimpse the future.<sup>2</sup>

With one organic engineer company supporting the SBCT, the mobility capability of the formation has been questioned. When we look at the strategic, operational, and tactical mobility of any organization, there are always trade-offs. A light organization has excellent strategic mobility but does not have the organic transportation assets that give it operational and tactical mobility. Likewise, the heavy forces have unmatched tactical mobility and speed in many environments at the expense of strategic mobility. The operational mobility of the heavy force is very dependent on local infrastructure and a large logistics and engineering tail. In the SBCT, the three forms of mobility are optimized for high-end, small-scale contingencies. According to the SBCT operational and organizational (O&O) concept, augmentation of the engineer company will be necessary when the brigade undertakes special operations support element or movement control office missions.<sup>3</sup> Looking through our lens to the future, it is clear that the situational understanding of the SBCT and future forces will be a fundamental mobility enabler. Proactive use of situational understanding through emerging doctrine will help to prioritize the use of SBCT engineer assets to provide mobility to the decisive force. In the Objective Force, we will see other units designed to exploit the information gained through situational

understanding. Prudence dictates that we invest thought and resources into the SBCT’s development and doctrine.

The concept and organization of the SBCT’s engineer companies has changed little since the report published in the May 2001 issue of *Engineer*.<sup>4</sup> One can see the mobility focus in the organization of these companies as shown in Figure 1, page 10. A rough estimate of the unit’s mobility capability is as follows: the three combat mobility platoons have a combined mobility capability of 400 to 900 kilometers of level 1 route clearance and 540 meters of mine-clearing line charge (MICLIC) lane reduction, plus rollers and plows. The mobility support platoon will have the capability to cross four gaps simultaneously with the rapidly emplaced bridge system. The bottom line is that by design, the organic engineer company is optimized for the mobility requirements of the SBCT.

To address the augmentation of the SBCT, the commander of the 555th Engineer Group presented a series of initiatives, known as the Engineer Augmentation Package (EAP), to the Engineer Council of Colonels in October 2002. The EAP concept provides the SBCT with a set of tailored modules to address operational and tactical missions outside of the SBCT’s current capabilities (see Figure 2, page 10).

The EAP is designed to augment all of the operational requirements of the SBCT. It will provide the SBCT with greater mobility, countermobility, and survivability options in theater, to enhance the maneuver force’s ability to conduct combat operations. This is done through the organization of five EAP modules:

- *Sapper module*—provides assets for route reconnaissance, local security, conventional mine emplacement, scatterable mine emplacement, obstacle reduction,

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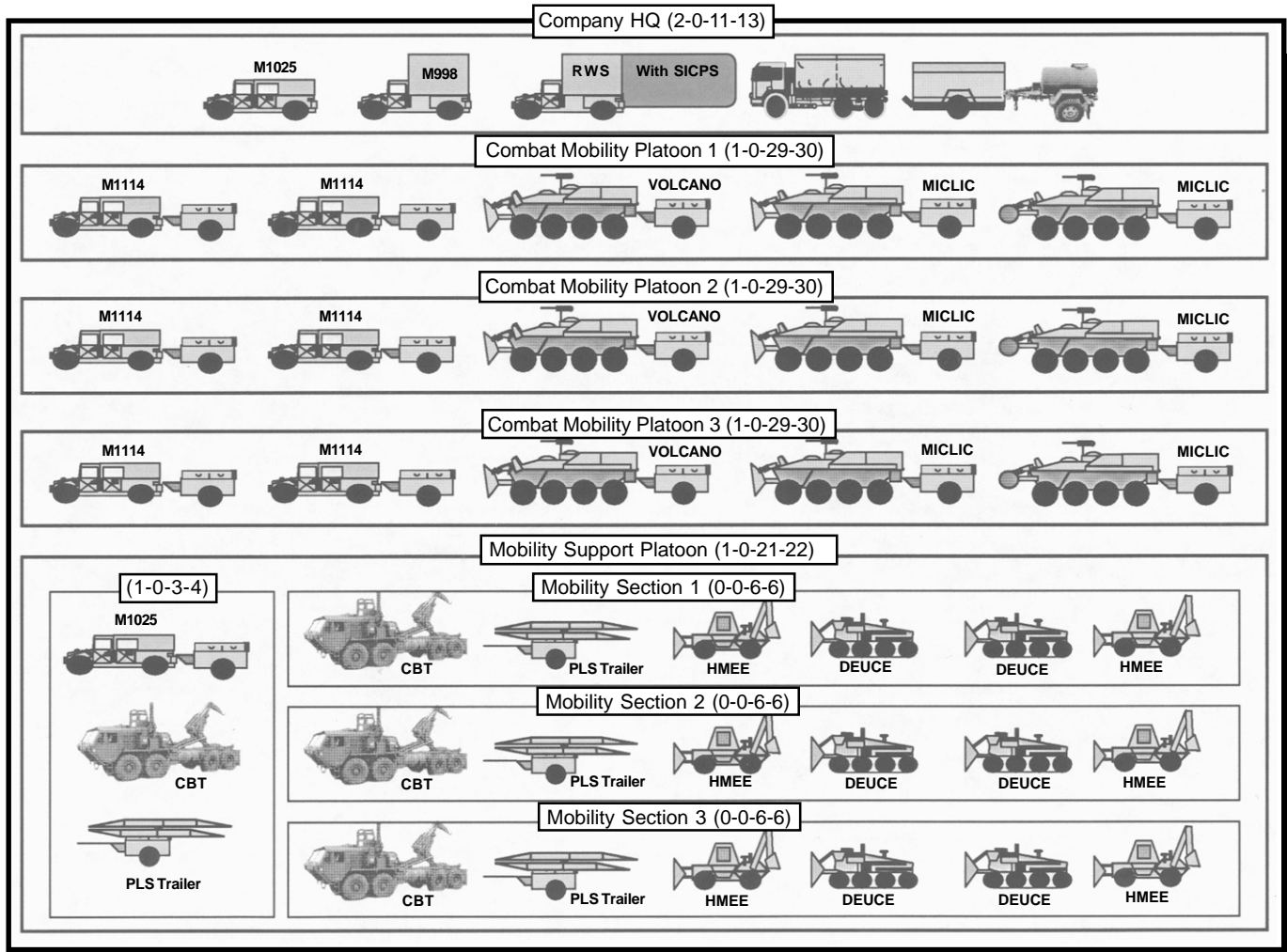


Figure 1. SBCT Engineer Company Objective TOE

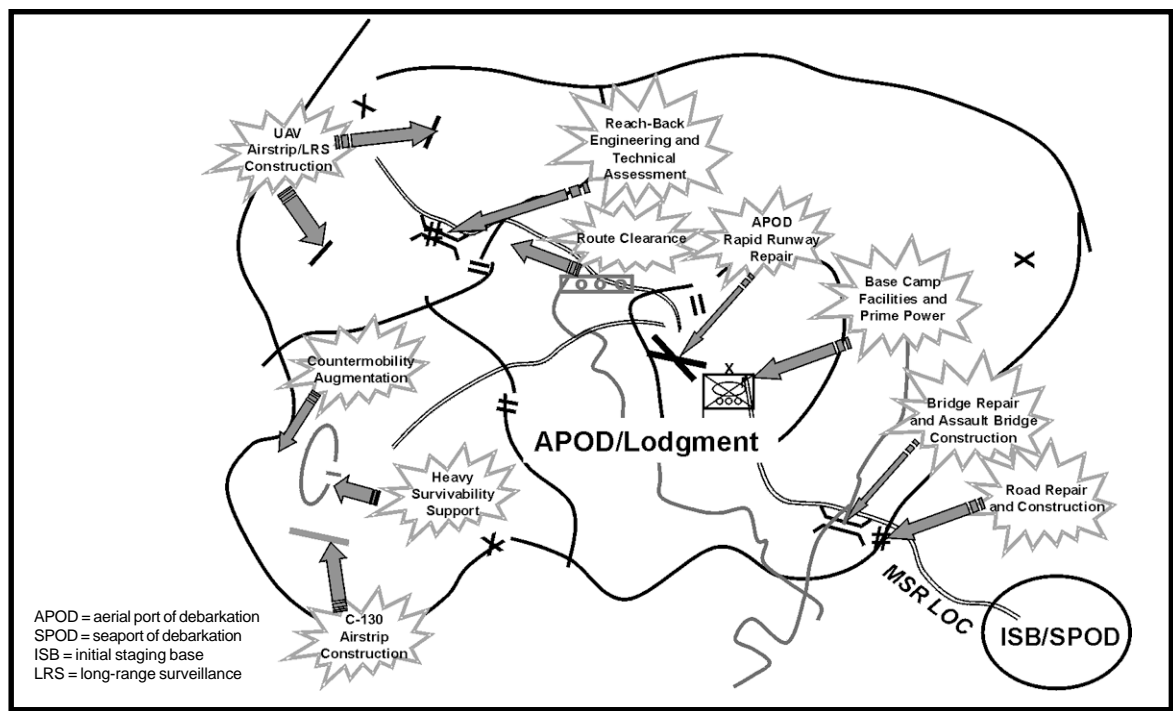


Figure 2. SBCT Support Missions (Combat Engineer Task Force [Corps Wheel Company/Battalion])

route and area clearance, stability and support operations, and mine-clearing operations support.

- *Horizontal module*—provides assets for main supply route (MSR) construction from unimproved trails or combat trails to gravel roadways, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) airstrip construction, rapid runway repair, MSR repair, road crater repair, survivability positions, and Hesco Bastion fortifications.
- *Vertical module*—provides for temporary base camp construction, to include the tactical operations center (TOC), guard towers, living areas, a dining facility administration center, and shower and lavatory facilities.
- *Bridge module*—provides additional bridging assets to the SBCT to include the medium girder bridge, the assault float bridge, the Mabey-Johnson bridge, and crossing-area engineer support.
- *Heavy module*—further augments the horizontal module, allowing it to provide complete survivability support, high-traffic roadway construction, new roadway construction, and increased productivity in all other horizontal operations. The heavy EAP module is not C-130 mobile.

The EAP modules will be organized with a command and control design that can be tailored to meet the needs of the mission (see Figure 3).

The engineer company mission in the SBCT O&O specifies that augmentation may be required "... on order, with augmentation, provides additional mobility (lines of communication [LOCs]), countermobility, survivability, and sustainment engineering support to the Interim Brigade Combat Team ...".<sup>5</sup> Today's challenge is to ensure that there is robust, deliberate, and perhaps contentious dialogue to refine the augmentation and organizational packages that will ensure the survivability and sustainment of the SBCT in future operations.

The U.S. Army Engineer School has worked closely with SBCT leadership to improve the mobility of the force with organic enablers in the nonlinear, noncontiguous battlefield of a small-scale contingency. In July 2002, during the Senior Leaders Course, assured mobility was introduced to the 1st Brigade, 25th Division (SBCT #2), to give unit leaders the tools to optimize their mobility by using situational understanding as a fundamental enabler. The instruction at the Senior Leaders Course, and the following Tactical Leaders Course in September 2002, was well received by the 1st Brigade commander and his subordinate commanders. The confidence they had in the concept was such that the brigade requested that the agenda of a second Tactical Leader Course, scheduled in November 2002, be modified to include discussion of assured mobility.

The central theme of the training was to help the SBCT leadership realize and use their unique enablers to answer the following commander's focus question: What must I do to sustain my ability to maneuver, to prevent enemy interference, and to protect the force in order to accomplish my mission?

The assured mobility framework seems most successful in providing an answer in the proactive, enabling perspective of warfare. The SBCT leadership addressed the six assured mobility fundamentals—predict, detect, prevent, avoid, neutralize, and protect—through an analysis of the four imperatives: develop the mobility common operational picture (COP), establish and maintain operating areas, attack the enemy's ability to influence, and maintain mobility and momentum. Analysis should be conducted from both friendly and enemy points of view, using three perspectives: en route to, on, and beyond the objective. The use of these perspectives is critical to success. The end result of the training was leaders looking at the battlefield from a new, proactive perspective

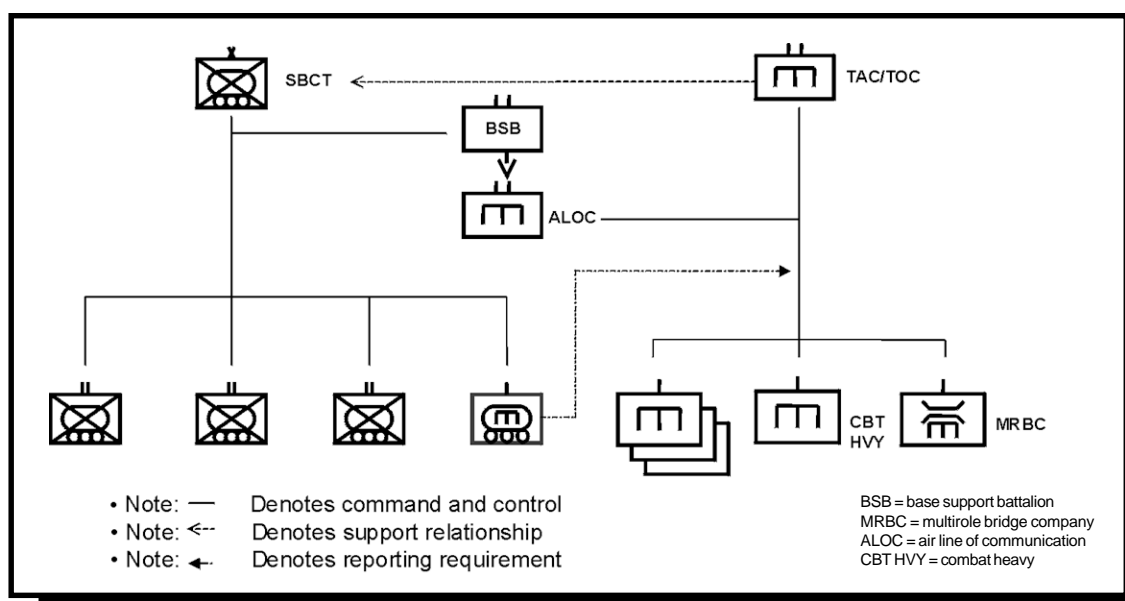


Figure 3. EAP and SBCT Support/Command and Control Relationship

focused on attacking the enemy—not reacting to the enemy’s impediments.

The SBCT provides a window for us to see the future of organizations and mobility. Its design is a balance between responsiveness and capability.<sup>6</sup> The focus of balance and mobility on the design is evident in the embedded engineer company. While smaller than the current mechanized formation, the embedded engineer company has significant mobility enablers. In some missions, the SBCT—like any organization—will need engineer augmentation. The challenge is to design scalable augmentation forces that can precisely meet the unit’s need for those specific missions. A doctrinal approach that recognizes situational understanding as a fundamental enabler will help define those packages. This approach will leverage the design and doctrine of the SBCT and augmenting forces to successfully shape future organizations.

The SBCT is an organization that is preparing for tomorrow’s operations, which provides us with insight to the tools that will be used in future organizations. The Engineer School will use the lessons and emerging doctrine of the Stryker Brigades to help shape the dialogue of the future, while capitalizing on their presence to improve our Regiment today and in the days and years to come.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> FM 3-0, *Operations*, 14 June 2001, Chapter 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Organizational and Operational [O&O] Concept for the Interim Brigade Combat Team [IBCT]*, 30 June 2000, Chapter 1.6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 9.1.

<sup>4</sup> Major Anthony O. Wright, *Concept and Organization of the IBCT Engineer Company*, Engineer, May 2001, pp. 6-9.

<sup>5</sup> *O&O Concept for the IBCT*, Chapter 9.1, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 1.8.

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